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On the 13th of August, 1601, returning from a mission to England I sailed from Dover, and crossing to Calais without mishap anticipated with pleasure the king's satisfaction when he should hear the result of my embassy, and learn from my mouth the just and friendly sentiments which Queen Elizabeth entertained towards him.

Unfortunately I was not able to impart these on the instant. During my absence a trifling matter had carried the king to Dieppe, whence his anxiety on the queen's account, who was shortly to be brought to bed, led him to take the road to Paris. He sent word to me to follow him, but necessarily some days elapsed before we met; an opportunity of which his enemies and mine were quick to take advantage, and that so insidiously and with so much success as to imperil not my reputation only but his happiness.

The time at their disposal was increased by the fact that when I reached the arsenal I found the Louvre vacant, the queen, who lay at Fontainebleau, having summoned the king thither. Ferret, his secretary, however, awaited me with a letter, in which Henry, after expressing his desire to see me, bade me nevertheless stay in Paris a day to transact some business. "Then," he continued, "come to me, my friend, and we will discuss the matter of which you know. In the meantime send me your papers by Ferret, who will give you a receipt for them."

Suspecting no danger in a course which was usual enough, I hastened to comply. Summoning Maignan, who, whenever I traveled, carried my portfolio, I unlocked it, and emptying the papers in a mass on the table, handed them in detail to Ferret. Presently, to my astonishment, I found that one, and

I HANDED THEM IN DETAIL TO FERRET.

this the most important, was missing. I went over the papers again, and again, and yet again. Still it was not to be found.

Whenever I traveled on a mission of importance I wrote my dispatches in one of the three modes, according as they were of little, great, or the first importance; in ordinary characters that is, in a cipher to which the council possessed the key, or in a cipher to which only the king and I held keys. This last, as it was seldom used, was rarely changed; but it was my duty, on my return from each mission, immediately to remit my key to the king, who deposited it in a safe place until another occasion for its use arose.

It was this key which was missing. I had been accustomed to carry it in the portfolio with the other papers, but in a sealed envelope which I broke and again sealed with my own signet whenever I had occasion to use the cipher. I had last seen the envelope at Calais, when I handed the portfolio to Maignan before beginning my journey to Paris; the portfolio had not since been opened, yet the sealed packet was missing.

More than a little uneasy, I recalled Maignan, who had withdrawn after delivering up his charge. "You rascal!" I said with some heat. "Has this been out of your custody?"

"The bag?" he answered, looking at it. Then his face changed. "You have cut your finger, my lord," he said.

I had cut it slightly in unbuckling the portfolio, and a drop or two of blood had fallen on the papers. But his reference to it at this moment, when my mind was full of my loss, angered me, and even awoke my suspicions. "Silence!" I said, "and answer me. Have you let this bag out of your possession?"

This time he replied straightforwardly that he had not.

"Nor unlocked it?"

"I have no key, your excellency."

That was true; and as I had at bottom the utmost confidence in his fidelity, I pursued the inquiry no farther in that direction, but made a third search among the papers. This also failing to bring the packet to light, and Ferret being in haste to be gone, I was obliged for the moment to put up with the loss, and draw what comfort I could from the reflection that no dispatch in the missing cipher was extant. Whoever had stolen it, therefore, another could be substituted for it and no one the worse. Still I was unwilling that the king should hear of the mischance from a stranger, and be led to think me careless; and I bade Ferret be silent about it unless Henry missed the packet, which might not happen before my arrival.

When the secretary, who readily assented, had given me his receipt and gone, I questioned Maignan afresh and more closely, but with no result. He had not seen me place the packet in the portfolio at Calais, and that I had done so I could vouch only my own memory, which I knew to be fallible. In the meantime, though the mischance annoyed me, I attached no great importance to it, but anticipating that a word of explanation would satisfy the king, and a new cipher dispose of other difficulties, I dismissed the matter from my mind.

Twenty-four hours later, however, I was rudely awakened. A courier arrived from Henry, and, surprising me in the midst of my last preparations at the arsenal, handed me an order to attend his majesty; an order couched in the most absolute and peremptory terms, and lacking all those friendly expressions which the king never failed to use when he wrote to me. A missive so brief and formal—and so needless, for I was on the point of starting—had not reached me for years; and coming at this moment when I had no reason to expect a reverse of fortune, it had all the effect of a thunderbolt in a clear sky. I stood stunned, the words which I was dictating to my secretary dying on my lips. For I knew the king too well, and had experienced his kindness too lately to attribute the harshness of the order to chance or forgetfulness; and, assured in a moment that I stood face to face with a grave crisis, I found myself hard put to it to hide my feelings from those about me.

Nevertheless, I did so with an effort; and, sending for the courier, asked him with an assumption of carelessness what was the latest news at court. His answer, in a measure, calmed my fears, though it could not remove them. He reported that the queen had been taken ill—or so the rumor went.

"Suddenly?" I said.

"This morning," he answered.

"The king was with her?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Had he left her long when he sent this letter?"

"It came from her chamber, your excellency."

"But—did you understand that her majesty was in danger?" I urged.

As to that, however, the man could not say anything; and I was left to nurse my conjectures during the long ride to Fontainebleau, where we arrived in the cool of the evening, the last stage through the forest awakening memories of past pleasure that combated in vain the disorder and apprehension which held my spirits. Dismounting in the dusk at the door of my apartments, I found a fresh surprise awaiting me in the shape of M. de Concini, the Italian, who, advancing to meet me before my foot was out of the stirrup, announced that he came from the king, who desired my instant attendance in the queen's closet.

Knowing Concini to be one of those whose influence with her majesty had more than once tempted the king to the most violent measures against her—from which I had with difficulty dissuaded him—I augured the worst from the choice of such a messenger; and wounded alike in my pride and the affection in which I held the king, could scarcely find words in which to ask him if the queen was ill.

"Indisposed, my lord," he replied, carelessly. And he began to whistle.

I told him that I would remove my boots and brush off the dust, and in five minutes be at his service.

"Pardon me," he said, "my orders are strict, and they are to request you to attend his majesty immediately. He expected you an hour ago."

I was thunderstruck at this—at the message, and at the man's manner; and for a moment I could scarcely restrain my indignation. Fortunately the habit of self-control came to my aid in time, and I reflected that an altereation with such a person could only lower my dignity. I contented myself, therefore, with signifying my assent by a nod, and followed him toward the queen's apartments.

In the ante-chamber were several persons, who, as I passed, saluted me with an air of shyness and incertitude which was enough of itself to put me on my guard. Concini attended me to the door of the chamber; there he fell back, and Mlle. Galigai, who was in waiting, announced me. I entered, assuming a serene countenance, and found the king and queen together, no other person being present. The queen was lying at length on a couch, while Henry, seated on a stool at her feet, seemed to be engaged in soothing and reassuring her. On my entrance, he broke off and rose to his feet.

"Here he is at last," he said, barely looking at me. "Now, if you will, dear heart, ask him your questions. I have had no communication with him, as you know, for I have been with you since morning."

The queen, whose face was flushed with fever, made a fretful movement, but did not answer.

"Do you wish me to ask him?" Henry said with admirable patience.

"If you think it is worth while," she muttered, turning sullenly and eyeing me from the middle of her pillows with disdain and ill-temper.

"I will, then," he answered, and he turned to me. "M. de Rosny," he said, in a formal tone, which even without the unaccustomed monsieur cut me to the heart, "be good enough to tell the queen how the key to my secret cipher, which I intrusted to you, has come to be in Mme. de Verneuil's possession."

I looked at him in the profoundest astonishment, and for a moment remained silent, trying to collect my thoughts under this unexpected blow. The queen saw my hesitation and laughed spitefully. "I am afraid, sire," she said, "that you have overrated this gentleman's ingenuity, though doubtless it has been much exercised in your service."

Henry's face grew red with vexation. "Speak, man!" he cried. "How came she by it?"

"Mme. de Verneuil?" I said.

The queen laughed again. "Had you not better take him out first, sir?" she said, scornfully, "and tell him what to say?"

"'Fore God, madame!" the king cried passionately, "you try me too far! Have I not told you a hundred times, and sworn to you, that I did not give Mme. de Verneuil this key?"

"If you did not give her that," the queen muttered, sullenly, picking at the silken coverlid which lay on her feet, "you have given her all else. You cannot deny it."

"That is the question, madame," I said.

"It is one easily answered," she retorted. "If you do not know, ask her."

"But, perhaps, madame, she will not answer," I ventured.

"Then command her to answer in the king's name!" the queen replied, her cheeks burning with fever. "And if she will not, then has the king no prisons—no fetters smooth enough for those dainty ankles?"

This was a home question, and Henry, who never showed to less advantage than when he stood between two women, cast a sheepish glance at me. Unfortunately the queen caught the look, which was not intended for her; and on the instant it awoke all her former suspicions. Supposing that she had discovered our collusion, she flung herself back with a cry of rage, and, bursting into a passion of tears, gave way to frantic reproaches, wailing and throwing herself about with a violence which could not but injure one in her condition.

The king stared at her for a moment in sheer dismay. Then his chagrin turned to anger, which, as he dared not vent it on her, took my direction. He pointed impetuously to the door. "Begone, sir!" he said in a passion, and with the utmost harshness. "You have done mischief enough here. God grant that we see the end of it! Go—go!" he continued, quite beside himself with fury. "Send Galigai here, and do you go to your lodging until you hear from me!"

Overwhelmed and almost stupefied by the catastrophe, I found my way out, I hardly knew how, and sending in the woman made my escape from the ante-chamber. But hasten as I might, my disorder, patent to a hundred curious eyes, betrayed me; and, if it did not disclose as much as I feared or the inquisitive desired, told more than any had looked to learn. Within an hour it was known at Nemours that his majesty had dismissed me with high words—some said with a blow; and half a dozen couriers were on the road to Paris with the news.

In my place some might have given up all for lost; but in addition to a sense of rectitude, and the consciousness of desert, I had to support me an intimate knowledge of the king's temper; which, though I had never suffered from it to this extent before, I knew to be on occasion as hot as his anger was short lived, and his disposition gener-

"BEGONE, SIR," HE SAID.

Henry let a gesture of despair escape him. "Are we to go back to that?" he said. Then turning to me: "Tell her," he said, between his teeth; "and tell me, Ventre Saint Gris—are you dumb, man?"

Discerning nothing for it at the moment save to bow before this storm, which had arisen so suddenly, and from a quarter the least expected, I hastened to comply. I had not proceeded far with my story, however—which fell short, of course, of explaining how the key came to be in Mme. de Verneuil's hands—before I saw that it won no credence with the queen, but rather confirmed her in her belief that the king had given to another what he had denied to her. And more, I saw that in proportion as the tale failed to convince her it excited the king's wrath and disappointment. He several times cut me short with expressions of the utmost impatience, and at last, when I came to a lame conclusion—since I could explain nothing except that the key was gone—he could restrain himself no longer. In a tone in which he had never addressed me before, he asked me why I had not, on the instant, communicated the loss to him; and when I would have defended myself by adducing the reason I had given above, overwhelmed me with abuse and reproaches, which, as they were uttered in the queen's presence, and would be repeated, I knew, to the Concinis and Galigais of her suite, who had no occasion to love me, carried a double sting.

Nevertheless, for a time, and until he had somewhat worn himself out, I let Henry proceed. Then, taking advantage of the first pause, I interposed. Reminding him that he had never had cause to accuse me of carelessness before, I recalled the twenty-two years during which I had served him faithfully, and the enmities I had incurred for his sake; and having by these means placed the discussion on a more equal footing, I descended again to particulars, and asked respectfully if I might know on whose authority Mme. de Verneuil was said to have the cipher.

"On her own!" the queen cried hysterically. "Don't try to deceive me, for it will be in vain. I know she has it; and if the king did not give it to her, who did?"

ous. I had hopes, therefore—although I saw dull faces enough among my suite, and some pale ones—that the king's repentance would overtake his anger, and its consequences outstrip any that might flow from his wrath. But though I was not altogether at fault in this, I failed to take into account one thing—I mean Henry's anxiety on the queen's account, her condition, and his desire to have an heir; which so affected the issue, that instead of fulfilling my expectations the event left me more despondent than before. The king wrote indeed, and within the hour, and his letter was in form an apology. But it was so lacking in graciousness so stiff, though it began "My good friend Rosny," and so insincere, though it referred to my past services, that when I had read it I stood awhile gazing at it, afraid to turn lest De Vic and Varennes, who had brought it, should read my disappointment in my face.

For I could not hide from myself that the gist of the letter lay, not in the expressions of regret which opened it, but in the complaint which closed it; wherein the king sullenly excused his outbreak on the ground of the magnitude of the interests which my carelessness had endangered, and the opening to harass the queen which I had heedlessly given. "This cipher," he said, "has long been a whim with my wife, from whom, for good reasons well known to you and connected with the grand duke's court, I have thought fit to withhold it. Now nothing will persuade her that I have not granted to another what I refused her. I trouble, my friend, lest you be found to have done more ill to France in a moment of carelessness than all your services have done good."

It was not difficult to find a threat underlying these words, nor to discern that if the queen's fancy remained unshaken, and ill came of it, the king would hardly forgive me. Recognizing this, and that I was face to face with a crisis from which I could not escape, but by the use of my utmost powers, I assumed a serious and thoughtful air; and without affecting to disguise the fact that the king was displeased with me, dismissed the envoys with a few civil speeches, in which I did not fail to speak of his majesty in terms that even malevolence could not twist to my disadvantage.

When they were gone, doubtless to tell Henry how I had taken it, I sat down to supper with La Font, Boisrueil, and two or three gentlemen of my suite; and, without appearing too cheerful, contrived to eat with my usual appetite. Afterwards I withdrew in the ordinary course to my chamber, and, being now at liberty to look the situation in the face, found it as serious as I had feared. The falling man has few friends; he must act quickly if he would retain any. I was not slow in deciding that my sole chance of an honorable escape lay in discovering, and that within a few hours—who stole the cipher and conveyed it to Mme. de Verneuil; and in placing before the queen such evidence of this as must convince her.

By way of beginning I summoned Maignan and put him through a severe examination. Later, I sent for the rest of my household—such, I mean, as had accompanied me—and, ranging them against the walls of my chamber, took a flambeau in my hand and went the round of them, questioning each, and marking his air and aspect as he answered. But with no result; so that after following some clews to no purpose, and suspecting several persons who cleared themselves on the spot, I became assured that the chain must be taken up at the other end, and the first link found among Mme. de Verneuil's following.

By this time it was nearly midnight, and my people were dropping with fatigue. Nevertheless, a sense of the desperate nature of the case animating them, they formed themselves voluntarily into a kind of council, all feeling their probity attacked, in which various modes of forcing the secret from those who held it were proposed—Maignan's suggestions being especially violent. Doubting, however, whether madame had more than one confidante, I secretly made up my mind to a course which none dared to suggest; and then, dismissing all to bed, kept only Maignan to lie in my chamber, that if any points occurred to me in the night I might question him on them.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

REMARKABLE DEVOTION.

Old Amzi Just 'Spised His Master for a Too Nice Consideration.

Amzi was an old school negro, who regarded the emancipation proclamation with contempt, and neither threats nor bribes could have prevailed upon him to leave an indulgent master, whom he served with the most unselfish devotion. He was a little, dried-up, black and much wrinkled darky of uncertain age, whose religion consisted solely of blind adoration of "Marse Davy Jackson," whose playmate he had been in childhood, whose nurse he had been in illness, and whose personal attendant he had been through a four years' war.

Mr. Jackson was owner of a steampack line, plying daily between Norfolk, Va., and Elizabeth City, N. C., through the Dismal Swamp canal, the principal revenue of which was derived from the carrying of the United States mail, Amzi being employed in the humble capacity of guard over the pouches.

The four years' contract had nearly expired, and a rival company, a stage coach line, was seeking to wrest the mail-carrying from the steamers. With a view to proving that the overland route was the more expeditious, and therefore more desirable, the stage raced with the steamer every day, and as the roadway followed the canal bank for twenty-two miles the contest became very exciting. The wheeled vehicle would usually forge ahead when the locks were reached, but as soon as released all steam would be crowded and the little boat would again be in the lead.

Amzi was, probably, the individual most concerned in these tests of speed, and he sought to incite the engineer to extreme effort by all sorts of threats and promises. He regarded the coaches with the utmost aversion and nearly wept in his distress lest his old master should lose his contract.

One day the contest had been unusually warm and close throughout the entire length of the canal and as they were drawing near the south mills, where the canal enters Pasquotank river, the stage was a good mile in the lead. Amzi was standing upon the rail swearing at the engineer and threatening the captain, when the boat lurched slightly and the negro was thrown into the water.

Immediately there was great confusion on board, for the old negro was revered by everyone, and it was known that he could not swim. Quickly as might be the steamer was stopped, a little yawl lowered, and Amzi, half drowned, was fished out of the water.

Scarcely did he reach the deck before he yelled out excitedly to the captain:

"Gin her two bells, you fool! Don' you see dat dum stage erscootin'?"

Then he rushed to the window of the engineer and shook his fist savagely at that official.

"What fur you done stop dis yere boat? Ise done tell Marse Davy, 'n' den dere 'll be a ingineer projec'in' fur a job."

"But, Amzi," expostulated the engineer, "if I hadn't stopped you would have drowned."

"G'long. I jis' 'spises yer, I does, aspilin' time on one lazy nigger. Now you jis' heah me; you sen' up de steam whilst I squats on de safety valve, 'n' ef you heahs anybody else drappin' you leave 'em be."—Chicago Tribune.